CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 10 July 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Bogumil Sujka (Poland)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 563rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. In accordance with its programme of work the Conference starts today its consideration of agenda item 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". However, in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

May I also note that the Conference will hold today after this plenary meeting an informal meeting on the substance of agenda item 3, with the participation of the leaders of the delegations of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America to the Strategic Arms Talks.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, Mr. Batsanov, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. BATSANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): First of all I should like to express the profound satisfaction of the Soviet delegation at the fact that you, Sir, the representative of Poland, Ambassador Bogumil Sujka, have taken the Chair at our Conference. In disarmament circles Ambassador Sujka is known as an experienced diplomat and a major specialist on the questions making up the agenda of our forum and on military and political problems in general. We are convinced that, with your election as President, substantial progress will be made in the Conference on the subjects for discussion. It also gives me particular pleasure to welcome Ambassador Sujka as President of the Conference because of the traditional relations of friendship, and good-neighbourliness and alliance that there are between our countries and peoples. Today these relations have been placed on a reliable footing of consistent mutual respect, equal rights, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs, freedom of social and political choice and other generally recognized principles and standards contained in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

One of the most remarkable features of the work of the Conference on Disarmament at this stage is that we have turned our eyes on ourselves, and that is no accident. The question of improving and, if you will, modernizing our forum is ripe for solution. The Conference must suit the needs of our times, the circumstances of our rapidly changing world. All the more so as it is the most representative and, hence, the only body of its kind, a unique disarmament negotiating forum.

By a peculiar irony of history, the Conference on Disarmament was set up during the "cold-war" years, where, in point of fact, the issue was not disarmament in the true sense of the term, but at the best arms control, i.e. the containment of the arms race in some areas without any serious attempts to

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reverse it. At the same time, disarmament itself was often used for political profiteering and propaganda campaigns of all kinds. Inevitably, the spirit of the times influenced the work of the Conference, which at times became an arena for mutual recrimination and sterile confrontational polemics. This can be from leafing through its old records. Of course, no one disputes the achievements of the Conference and its predecessors. It has to its credit documents essential to the destiny of the world: treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on their non-deployment on the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and conventions prohibiting bacteriological weapons and modification of the environment for military purposes. We are close to completing work on a convention banning chemical weapons. However, if the results of the work of the Conference are objectively and self-critically assessed, in accordance with today's exacting criteria, there is no way they can be called particularly successful. The last time an agreement was worked out within the framework of the Conference was in 1977. Since then the stocks of weapons on our planet, of course, have not diminished but have grown even further. There have emerged completely new problems relating to the spread of the arms race both into new technologies and into various regions of the world.

On the other hand, it is obvious that fundamentally new prospects for disarmament are now opening up. This has to do with the end of the post-war period of confrontation and with the emerging shift from a block model of security to a qualitatively different world in which relations between States are based on common, all-European and, in the longer term, universal structures and institutions.

We have been convinced yet again that events are indeed developing in this direction by the results of the London summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the NATO countries. We consider the decisions adopted there as a positive response to the call made by the parties to the Warsaw Treaty to begin the process of transforming the two military alliances into political organizations and we see in them a readiness on the part of the NATO countries to put an end by joint efforts to the "cold war" and move on to a period of peace made stable and permanent. The NATO countries' proposals to the Warsaw Treaty States to establish contacts at various levels between the member States of the two alliances and to hold a regular meeting to discuss military doctrines and, of course, the proposal for the adoption of a joint declaration in which we would solemnly state that we are no longer adversaries and reaffirm our intention to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State deserve a positive rating. We welcome the proclaimed willingness of the NATO countries to conclude as soon as possible a treaty on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe and then embark on negotiations on further reductions in such forces, as well as to open talks in the very near future on tactical

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nuclear weapons in Europe. That the beginning of these talks is tied to the attainment of a treaty on conventional armed forces should not cause objections because there is now, as is known, a general understanding of the need to conclude the Vienna talks as soon as possible.

We attach particularly great importance to the statement that the NATO countries have no aggressive intentions, are committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and will never be the first to use force. Similar statements have been made in the past by Warsaw Treaty member States as well. This creates a fundamentally different political climate in Europe and, subject to the consistent implementation of these statements, could constitute a conceptual foundation for a new security system on the continent. So, there are very good possibilities in the world, but it has to be said that our Conference has not yet started truly and fully to use them.

What is the reason for this state of affairs? The question is a perfectly legitimate one and is of concern to all of those who are not indifferent to the problems of the day. But asking it is easier than answering it. Of course, one could look for culprits; that is always so to speak, the easy way out. We have our opinion on this score and so, no doubt, do others, and their view does not necessarily coincide with ours. However, such a search would probably be an exercise in futility. And it would hardly bring us any closer to accomplishing the task of enhancing the efficiency of our forum.

What is important is that there is now virtually consensus that this task - the task of enhancing efficiency - must be performed. And that, no doubt, requires looking at the problem in a broader context and trying first of all to determine the Conference's place in the process of disarmament in general.

The complexity of the problems that we have to solve stems from the fact that we are a multilateral forum dealing with global disarmament. Furthermore, tremendous differences can be seen not only between States' interests but also between the concrete situations in various regions. Here it is particularly hard to find common denominators. This is an objectively difficult task and it cannot be fully accomplished by remaining within the framework of the problem of disarmament, for disarmament - particularly global disarmament - is not an isolated process. Here there are bound up into one bundle both the problems of regional conflicts and such global "sore points" as development strategy, prevention of the spread of technologies facilitating the development of nuclear or chemical weapons, missiles or other arms, and the problems of strategic stability and global and regional military balances. Therefore, the resolution of the problems of global disarmament does not, of course, depend solely on the reform of the Conference.

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In this connection, another, unexpected question arises: is the Conference necessary at all and need it be improved? Perhaps there are enough bilateral and multilateral negotiating channels that come into being and will probably continue to come into being as problems arise?

We none the less believe that the Conference, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is necessary. Furthermore, its importance will increase in the future because, if the progress being made at bilateral and multilateral regional disarmament negotiations, and which we welcome, is not confirmed on the global scale, it might in the end come to nothing, for the possibility will remain that the arms race might spill over into other regions of the world, "outflanking" the existing agreements. The military and political realities of our world are such that creating an "enclave of security", for instance in Europe, will be impossible if the potential for instability and weapons stockpiles grow outside its boundaries. In the final analysis, security is indivisible.

That global multilateral disarmament negotiations are really possible is shown by the work on the banning of chemical weapons. It represents the first, experiment of its kind, and consequently an especially valuable one, an experiment in thrashing out answers to literally all the questions in a truly multilateral organ. Going together with it, and, as we see it, going together not badly on the whole, are the bilateral Soviet-United States efforts. As yet there is no other experience of the close co-existence of multilateral and bilateral negotiations. All in all, the negotiations on chemical weapons have already yielded many useful lessons for negotiating theory and practice, lessons that it still remains to understand.

Unfortunately, on many other items of the Conference's agenda there is still no unanimity even as regards the topics and goals of the negotiations, but that does not mean that unanimity cannot be achieved at all. The search for points of convergence is one of the main tasks of the Conference on Disarmament and to a large extent determines its raison d'etre.

The Conference on Disarmament is also a suitable forum for discussions on how to impart greater dynamism to the process of disarmament, how to make it more comprehensive, purposeful and conducive to the creation in the world of a stable situation in which the threat of war would be reduced to a minimum and ultimately eliminated. For in the final analysis disarmament is not an end in itself, but merely one of the means of building a secure world.

In this connection, the need to enhance the effectiveness of the Conference is today more pressing than ever before. We consider this to mean giving the Conference additional capability to identify and seek to resolve problems. With this in mind, we believe that we should move towards greater flexibility and at the same time greater discipline.

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A start could be made with relatively simple measures on which, to our mind, areas of agreement and mutual understanding are already coming to light. In our view, these include the proposal by the Western Group to change our forum's schedule of work. In principle the Soviet delegation supports this proposal. It would enable the time to be used more rationally and would also create additional possibilities for consultations and preparation of new instructions. Of course, the significance of this measure should not be overestimated and its adoption should not put a stop to the reform of the Conference. But if we approved it in the very near future, that would be a first step towards establishing better conditions for reinvigorating the work of the Conference in general.

We appreciate that to solve all the problems of improving the work of the Conference at one blow, as the saying has it, is impossible. Numerous questions and proposals are not yet ripe for solution. Here, obviously, the continuity of the process in general will inevitably be accompanied by something of a step-by-step approach. As a contribution to our discussions, I would like to express some ideas on this issue.

First of all, we believe that the rule of consensus should be maintained. The question of this rule arises most often in connection with the establishment of ad hoc committees and their mandates. That is understandable. But it can hardly be expected that if we decide to hold negotiations on a particular problem against a State's will that State will then happily accept the talks and take part in them. At all events, we will not get any final result that way. Moreover, consensus is a kind of guarantee of equal rights for all the members of the Conference regardless of any one State's military significance and of political schemes.

All the same, some changes might be made in the procedure for setting up the working bodies. First, we might look into the question of not repeating every year the procedure of setting up an ad hoc committee with a particular mandate if the committee has already been established once. Let the work continue until the mandate is fulfilled. At the same time, a clearly-delimited two-week period might be set aside at the beginning of each winter session to review all the mandates. If there was no agreement on a new mandate, that would mean that the previous one was still valid. Of course, during the rest of the time it would be possible to hold informal consultations concerning mandates, as was recently done, for example, under the leadership of Ambassador Donowaki in connection with the searches for agreement concerning agenda item 1.

Second, the membership of the ad hoc committees need not necessarily correspond 100 per cent to that of the Conference. A more flexible approach is possible here, based on States' interest in work in specific areas. However, it is important that all the members of the Conference should be in

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agreement in principle with the carrying out of the work. Generally speaking, the Conference should have the possibility of changing the membership and functions of its working bodies depending on the tasks at hand.

It would also be a good idea to provide for the participation of all interested States in the negotiating process on an equal footing. To that end, thought might be given to making the rights of observers in ad hoc committees equal to those of members of the Conference, or, in any event, to doing so in those ad hoc committees which have negotiating mandates. We also believe that, once we have accepted someone as an observer, there is no need to reconsider that decision every year. In saying this, of course, we proceed from the belief that neither the Conference nor its working bodies should be turned into mere places of passage.

Another very important question is how effectively we use our time. Frankly, the Secretariat's figures for the time we have lost through late starting and early adjournment of meetings do not worry me very much, although maybe we do all need more self-discipline in this respect. The fact is, however, that sometimes talks in the corridors before or after a meeting are more important than the work at the meeting itself, and there is nothing wrong with that. A broader approach is needed to the problem of the allocation and effective use of time, in an effort to get both more precise time-limits and greater flexibility.

The present practice is for us to cover each and every agenda item in the course of a session. During the summer sessions, in particular all the ad hoc committees that have been established function on a formal basis. How they function is another matter. Delegations, even the biggest ones, are not in a position to cover all these areas properly.

Would it not be better to vary the time for the discussion of specific issues? Or at any rate, not to deal with everything at once? Besides, reorganizing work in this way would be a factor of discipline. For example, if delegations knew that the Ad hoc Committee on Outer Space was planning to sit in, say, May-June, they would get relevant instructions ready by that time. During the rest of the time the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee could hold consultations with delegations. In general, in any one session - especially if they are to be shorter than at present - attention should be concentrated on substantive work on not more than two or three issues. Apart from everything else, that would make possible better planning of experts' participation and, perhaps, reduce delegations expenditure in connection with the stay of experts in Geneva. Of course, in the present circumstances the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons should sit without any time-limits.

About plenary meetings: there are two many of them. At the beginning of the winter session, as a rule there is a great rush of speakers, which is an argument for keeping to the present practice for that period, say for two

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weeks. During the rest of the time, except, perhaps, for the last two weeks of the summer session, there could be formal plenary meetings once a week. That would make it possible to hold more informal meetings. But here again, I think, we should not chase after figures. The Soviet delegation suggests that thought should be given to how to increase the yield from this informal "pre-negotiating" form of work which - if it is well organized - would make it possible to have a frank exchange of views on the positions, concerns and security factors lying at the basis of States' approaches. In our view, it would be helpful if the informal meetings on any given topic were held during specifically agreed periods of time as well. The work at them could be guided not by the regular President of the Conference, but by a specially designated co-ordinator.

Finally, the main question: what should the Conference deal with? Should the agenda be changed? This is perhaps the most difficult question. On the one hand, especially taking into account the way we implement it in practice, the present agenda may seem obsolete. However, I would not be in a hurry to draw practical conclusions.

The agenda is quite comprehensive. I am sure that many things, although not everything, can be done within the framework of the present agenda. Some of the items, for example, nuclear test ban and chemical weapons, are sufficiently concrete. Others, however, are extremely broad.

Take, for example, nuclear disarmament. What is there to talk about here? We shall probably not manage now to begin talks on complete nuclear disarmament. Perhaps this topic should be made more concrete?

We have already talked about the problem of ending the production of weapon-grade fissionable materials. A no less important problem is that of the non-use for military purposes of nuclear materials which become available as a result of nuclear disarmament agreements. As a first step, we could discuss appropriate machinery for monitoring this measure and start scientific and technical investigation of the possibilities of using such material for peaceful purposes.

Prevention of nuclear war is too broad a topic. Perhaps we should try to split it into more concrete components and, as a result, come at the actual directions of work?

One of those directions, in our view, might be the discussion of the idea of a multilateral agreement between all the nuclear Powers on measures to reduce the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war, as well as on the establishment of national nuclear risk reduction centres by all the nuclear Powers.

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We should not forget about the so-called "decalogue", which in essence is the Conference's mandate and the potential of which we have simply not yet explored.

We view with interest the suggestions to consider naval problems at the Conference. The USSR delegation has already expressed itself on the nuclear aspects of these problems. The topic is a special one. But it is time to begin talking about it more broadly too. Let this work be informal, so to say "prenegotiating" in nature. There is no need to speed up the course of events. To begin with we might make a sort of inventory of the problems and suggestions in this area and then concentrate on working out measures for stability, predictability and mutual understanding in naval matters, without touching for the while on questions of fleet structure and size. The ideas of an international agreement on guarantees for international maritime communications and an international agreement on the prevention of incidents at sea deserve attention.

Confidence-building measures in a broad sense also possibly represent a promising direction. One of the systematizing factors of a secure world is the establishment of a ramified infrastructure of measures for confidence and transparency covering various types of military activity and various regions, possibly with regional particularities.

Consideration of the question of limiting the use for military purposes of scientific and technical achievements could become a major independent direction of the work of our Conference. Here a start might be made by working out measures for monitoring and openness in this area, including development of the concept and practice of establishing open laboratories, extensive joint research and development in military and technical fields, the organization of on-site inspections of the use made of transferred technology, etc.

Lastly, why not consider regional disarmament measures?

There remain on the agenda of the Conference a number of old, seemingly futureless items. Naturally, there is a temptation simply to strike them off. But in our view there is no sense in hurrying here either. It would be better to try to take a fresh look at them and to weigh up in the light of the new political realities that are emerging what the Conference on Disarmament could do. For our part, we will think about this and we call on everyone to join us in this creative exercise.

One of these issues is, for example, the prohibition of radiological weapons. Although there are at last some signs of progress in the so-called "traditional direction", things are at a standstill as regards the prohibition of attacks against nuclear installations. Perhaps an attempt should be made

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to discuss this second problem in another forum or in a separate working body of the Conference on Disarmament with the participation of those who would be interested in that.

In conclusion, literally one comment on the formal membership and the issue of expanding the Conference. Our preference is for the rapid application of the 1+1+2 formula for expansion. We agreed on that formula long ago and until recently no one had any doubts about it. The task that has already been set should be completed. Then a wider look could be taken at the problem of expanding the Conference and its membership in the new historical circumstances.

These are the considerations I wanted to share with you today, distinguished colleagues. Perhaps not everything in them is beyond dispute but we do not claim to hold a monopoly on truth. We are ready to study counter-suggestions with the greatest good will. I also think that in this matter it is important for all of us not to disregard possible advice from the secretariat of the Conference, which is composed of experienced and devoted staff. In short, our aim is to facilitate the development of a process that would ultimately make the Conference more useful to each of the States participating in it and to the international community in general.

The PRESIDENT: That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

As announced earlier, the Conference will hold after this plenary meeting an informal meeting on the substance of agenda item 3, with the participation of the negotiators in the bilateral Strategic Arms Talks. May I suggest that we adjourn this plenary meeting now and convene the informal meeting in five minutes' time.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 12 July, at 10 a.m. The plenary meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.